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System Dynamics Group

The BOSTON Project

Discussion Paper #6
Boston Navy Yard
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Against the background of earlier discussion papers, the Navy Yard represents a factor in the equation to balance jobs and people within the City of Boston. Closing of the Navy Yard will cost the city 5,900 blue-collar jobs. (How many Boston residents work there?) Yet, the Navy Yard also represents a vast potential resource for creating up to 20,000 new industrial jobs. Whether the closing represents disaster or opportunity for the city depends upon finding a suitable tenant for the site. Many uncontrollable forces will determine whether the city succeeds in attracting 20,000 jobs, or fails to find any tenant. In either event, however, Boston can control some forces which will help to gain maximum benefit from whatever new employment

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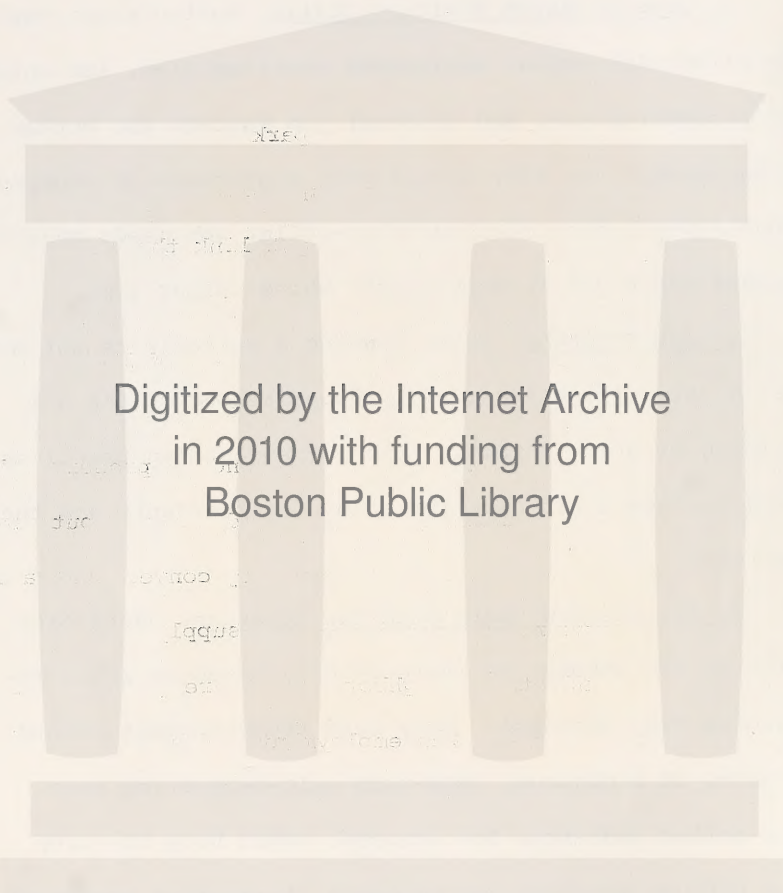
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opportunities a new tenant may create.

1. Jobs to Match Resident Skills. Boston needs employers who offer blue-collar employment opportunities, low entry skill requirements, and internal job ladders for worker advancement. The city should give preference to prospective tenants who better meet our blue-collar job needs than to tenants who would largely create white-collar jobs.

2. Job Training. While finding a suitable tenant may pose great difficulties, early negotiations to tie job training programs directly into company hiring practices could produce a net gain for both city residents and the new tenant.

3. Balance New Costs with Tax Revenues. Many city policies now attempt to increase city revenues while decreasing city expenses. Navy Yard redevelopment should produce, at a minimum, long-term self-supporting uses. Blue-collar industry, for example, would help the city both through property tax payments (increasing revenues) and through helping upgrade resident socio-economic status (decreasing expense needs).



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4. Commuters. Efforts to place Boston residents, rather than commuters in new jobs will also benefit the city. Certainly the city might encourage Charlestown and South Boston residents who live nearby to apply early for jobs. The city might also create parking facilities free for residents but prohibitively expensive for non-residents. New public transportation lines might link the sites with Boston neighborhoods.

5. New Residents. Many thousands of new jobs will tend to attract outsiders to the city. These in-migrants could increase city population and thereby tend to preserve the present imbalance between jobs and residents without lowering unemployment. Tight controls on housing conversions and other measures to restrict the housing supply in Charlestown, South Boston, and other neighborhoods where potential in-migrants might settle. New employment and higher resident incomes could compensate for the tighter housing market. Normal job turnover in industry and part-time industrial jobs might then benefit local high school students and graduates rather than attracting newcomers. Such careful

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attention to creation of a dynamic balance between local housing, jobs and people will help generate neighborhood stability.

6. New Housing. City policy should discourage development proposals for new lower or middle-income housing on the Charlestown site. (Air traffic noise renders the South Boston site unlivable.) Charlestown and the city as a whole already have more lower and middle income people than employment openings. Even upper-income housing could further imbalance jobs and people in the city, although planners should undertake a fuller analysis before reaching a conclusion. Increasing the number of upper-income people in the city through creation of new high density housing may not serve the best long-term interests of Boston if population densities and associated service and congestion costs also increase. Upper income family housing appears attractive, particularly, if some decentralization of office construction from Downtown to Charlestown accompanied such plans so as to minimize commuting.

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